

Hopper LIVES by thebreeze105.5

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Summary: What would Hawkins, Indiana be like if a certain chief of police hadn't died? And what would that police chief's life be like now? Speculation fic that explores the scenario where Jim Hopper doesn't die and maybe, just maybe, finally gets to take Joyce Byers out to Enzo's. Some Jopper/Mileven *NOW COMPLETE*

1. Prologue

Prologue

Jim Hopper grunted in pain. He was on a catwalk next to a machine that was powering the gate to the Upside Down. He and Joyce had been ready to close it, when, while they counted to three, Hopper was unexpectedly ambushed by the Russian assassin Mayor Kline had hired that, to Hopper, looked like the Terminator. Their battle took them through the window of the control room overlooking the machine, to the catwalk next to the machine, in front of the gate. Jim had finally gained the upper hand, and tossed the Terminator into the machine, killing the man instantly.

However, the impact from the man's body meeting the inner workings of the machine had caused a major electrical surge, sending bolts of lightning in all directions, and was all that separated Hopper from safety in the control room next to Joyce. Hopper needed time to think of another way to safety. But time was running slim. Russian soldiers were beginning to run into the room to contain the machine and keep the gate to the Upside Down open.

Hopper had an idea. He wasn't as quick as he used to be back in his days as a NYPD officer, but he was sure he had enough adrenaline to pull this one off. He looked up at the control room to give Joyce a smile, only to see Joyce staring at him with tears in her eyes. She had managed to reach both the keys to close the gate and was preparing to turn them.

Realizing what she was doing, Hopper took off running, jumping over a surge of electricity from the machine, and climbing up the stairs to the control room, all the while having the Russians shoot at him. Just as Hopper dove in the control room and collapsed from exhaustion, Joyce pulled both of the keys. The machine began to sputter as the gate started to close, and within twenty seconds, all of the Russian soldiers on the ground floor had been burned to a crisp as the machine exploded and the gate to the Upside Down closed once and for all.

Joyce looked up from the control panel, desperately scanning the

room and catwalk below for any sign of Hopper. She gasped with surprise and disbelief when she heard Jim, in the far right corner of the room next to the entrance, cough and weakly call out, "Joyce?" "Oh my god! Hopper!" Joyce exclaimed with joy in her voice and tears in her eyes, quickly running over to embrace him on the floor. After she pulled away, Hopper caressed her cheek and said, "Told you that we make a pretty good team." "Yes," Joyce replied with a tearful laugh. "We do". "Now, about that date at Enzo's..." Hopper trailed off as Joyce pulled him in for a kiss. Before their lips could meet, however, Murray burst through the entrance into the control room. "Jim! Joyce! You made it! We all made it! It worked!" As he ran over to meet them, Hopper and Joyce shared one last look, smiling at each other, as they rose to their feet and embraced Murray, grateful for the plan's success.

The group had been found by the military men Dr. Owens brought in shortly after. After changing back into their civilian clothes, they quickly ran outside the mall to hopefully reunite with their loved ones. Hopper was standing outside the entrance next to an ambulance, desperately scanning the parking lot for any sign of Eleven, when suddenly he felt the wind being knocked out of him and a warm embrace. He looked down and smiled with joy as he saw it was El. His adopted daughter. *No*, he thought. *My real daughter. Blood or not.* "Hey, kid," he said warmly, wrapping her into his arms and gently giving her a kiss on the head. "I thought," El choked out, "I thought I might've lost you. I tried to look for you, but my powers wouldn't work, and..." she trailed off as she choked up. "Hey," Hopper replied, taking her by the shoulders and kneeling down so he could speak to her face to face. "I made it. *We* made it. Don't worry about the powers, kid. Whether they come back or not, I am proud of you. I am so proud of you for what you did tonight. And I'm sorry I haven't been there for you these past few days. You're my daughter, and I love you more than words can describe. El smiled, closed her eyes, nodded, and went in

for another hug. "I love you too, Dad."

A/N: And that is it folks! I'll be posting more chapters as time goes on detailing what happens next, but I'm not sure if I want to go into a full blown S4 fic or keep it nice and fluffy like it is

now. I thought this fic would be a good idea bc I haven't seen many running off the "what if?" speculation of if Hopper survived, so I figured I'd try my hand at it. Let me know what you thought in a review, this is the first fanfic I've written in years but Stranger Things was the first show to really make me passionate about doing it again, so I'm excited to hear your feedback!

2. Chapter One: Aftermath

It had been one day since the Battle of Starcourt, and so much had already changed. The official cover story from Dr. Owens' people was a fire, covering the damage to the mall and the deaths of the thirty unfortunate souls who had been flayed.

Jim had been busier than ever as the town's chief of police due to the incident, though there was one plus. Dr. Owens had managed to get Mayor Kline booted from the mayor's office and arrested due to "alleged involvement" in the planning and cause of the fire at Starcourt. Dr. Owens had also let Hopper know that they needed to meet within the week. About what, Hopper didn't know, but he was almost certain he'd finally be getting some answers about just how the hell the Russians were able to infiltrate Hawkins right under his nose.

After a afternoon full of calls from citizens of Hawkins and questions from reporters, Hopper was finally able to sneak off from the station, leaving Powell in charge for the night. He hopped in his new police Blazer and got ready to drive off. *Well, not exactly new*, He thought. Hawkins had actually been able to afford another Blazer for the police department before the mall opened and had purchased another one to use as a backup in case the other one went down. *Convenient*, Hopper thought to himself. He buckled the seatbelt, laid his hat on the dashboard, and drove off to Melvald's General Store.

When he arrived, Hopper was surprised to find that the store was as empty as the last time he had been in to visit Joyce. The mall may have been permanently closed, but customers hadn't exactly been flocking back to Main Street. As he stepped through the door, Joyce looked up from her counter with a grin. "Hey, Hop," she greeted him. "Joyce," Hopper began. "Ready for tomorrow tonight?" Their date at Enzo's was set for the next evening. "I won't be if you keep asking about it," Joyce replied with a chuckle. "You've already called twice." "I'm just excited, is all," Hopper said, blushing slightly. "Not every day I get to take a pretty girl out." Joyce allowed herself a small giggle before changing the subject.

"How's Eleven doing?" "Better than I am," Hopper replied. "I think

she's more upset about losing her powers than anything else." "She'll be okay. She's a fighter, like her dad." Joyce said. Hopper smiled before replying, "Listen, Joyce, I gotta admit something to you." Joyce's brow furrowed in confusion. "What?" She asked with her eyebrow raised. "It's about the whole heart to heart thing. With Mike and El." Hopper continued. "I wrote the letter, but I didn't really talk to them. I meant to, but you know how I am with that kind of stuff, and then they started laughing at me, and, I just kind of lost it, so I took Mike aside and told him to stay away from El. In some not so kind words."

"Oh, Hop," Joyce said after a moment spent processing the information with a sympathetic look on her face. She crossed her arms and leaned back against the wall of the store. "Well, you definitely need to apologize to them." "I was afraid you would say that," Jim said with a exasperated look on his face. "Hey, Hop," Joyce continued as she stood up and walked over to Jim to give him a reassuring rub on the shoulder. "You can do this. Just remember, do *not* let anything they say or do get you angry. If you have to, walk outside to cool off for a bit. But you *gotta* keep your cool." "Alright, sure," Hopper replied. He paused for a bit before looking down at Joyce with a smile. "What would I do without you?" "You'd be giving horrible dating advice, for one," Joyce laughed, as the two shared a small kiss. After the kiss, Hopper bid Joyce his goodbyes as he stepped out of Melvald's, ready to talk to his daughter and her boyfriend with a renewed sense of confidence.

By the time Hopper got back to his cabin, night had already fallen in Hawkins. The cabin had suffered heavy damage in a encounter with the Mind Flayer, but he and El had already been able to do some small repairs here and there and most of the holes in the roof had been covered by a tarp. When Hopper walked in, Eleven was in her room listening to music. "Hey, kid," He started. "Can you come out for a bit?" Eleven hopped out of her room with a smile on her face, happy to see her father. "Hey, Dad." "Hey, where's Mike?" Jim asked.

El's face fell a little when she heard Mike's name. "We haven't really talked since what happened," El admitted. "What? Why not?" Hopper inquired. "Well, I dumped his ass." Hopper's face lit up in surprise. "*Dumped* his ass?!" He asked incredulously. "Yes," Eleven nodded. "He

lied to me and said he couldn't see me one day. That his nana was sick, but she wasn't." "Listen, kid, that was my fault," Hopper began to explain. "I know," El said, as her face fell with disappointment. "Look, I never meant for you guys to break up. I was just...scared." "Scared?" El asked, her face looking up in question. "...Yeah," Hopper answered. "It's just, that you're growing up so fast. And I focused for so long on not losing you, but I feel like it's happening anyway." "You won't lose me," El said as she stepped closer to her father and grabbed his shoulders.

"Did you really want to break up with Mike?" Hopper asked. "No," El answered. "But I asked Max what to do, and that's what she said to. We talked a little before we fought the Mind Flayer at the mall, and he told me what you did. But I don't know if he still wants to be my boyfriend." "Tell you what, kid," Hopper said. "Why don't you give him a call and ask him to stop by so you guys can talk it out?" "Really?" El asked with hope in her voice. "Sure," Hopper said. "But first, I'd like for you to read this letter." Hopper pulled out the letter that he had written for the heart to heart. El took it from him and sat down at the kitchen table to read it. By the time she was done reading, there were tears in her eyes and she ran to her father for a hug. As they embraced, Hopper said, "Now, when Mike gets here, make sure you leave the door open three inches for me, alright kid?" Eleven laughed as she wiped tears from her eyes and smiled. "Yes," she said as the two shared a small, teary chuckle.

A/N: And chapter one is in the books! Thank you to everyone for the positive reviews/favs/follows! This fanfic is very much still a work in progress, so I appreciate all the great feedback. I've been uploading daily, but that pace is unlikely to keep up as the story goes on. I still don't know how long I want this story to go, but I will let you guys know for sure when I feel that I've brought it to a satisfying conclusion. Again, thank you guys so much for reading!

3. Chapter Two: The Talk

It was late when Mike finally arrived at Hopper's cabin. He checked his wristwatch for the time. 8:15, it read, or 8-1-5, as Eleven would say. Mike winced a little as he thought of his girlfriend's name. *Ex-girlfriend*, he thought. *She hasn't taken you back yet.* Mike had been surprised when his mother told him he had a phone call- it was getting late, why wouldn't one of his friends just use their walkie like they always did when they wanted to talk that late? He had been even more surprised when he answered the call only to hear El's voice on the other line. She wanted to meet with him and asked if he could come by Hopper's cabin. He knew his parents wouldn't want him out that late after the Starcourt incident, but screw it. He needed to see El. It might be his last chance to win her back. Still, as he climbed the steps leading to the front door, he couldn't help but allow his mind to wander to the negative possibilities. *What if she only asked me to come here to say she wants to stay broken up? Or that she doesn't even want to be friends anymore?*

He shuddered at the thought. And another thing. Mike had noticed Hopper's blazer sitting in the driveway, indicating that he was home. *Is Hopper okay with this? I thought he wanted me to stay away.* Sure, Hopper had given Mike a reassuring "be careful" at Starcourt, but that didn't mean his feelings on Mike had changed, did it? Mike took a deep breath and paused to compose himself before knocking on the door. There was no way El wanted to break up with him, or at least stop being his friend. She hadn't really been acting as if they were broken up since Mike initially apologized at the hospital, but she hadn't been acting like his girlfriend again either. Mike wondered if she really knew what "dump your ass" means. Knowing Max, she probably planted the saying in her head. Mike shook his head. Regardless, it was time to man up and find out. He knocked on the door.

Hopper was seated in his recliner, El situated on the couch next to him, watching the newest *Miami Vice* episode when both heard a knock on the door. "I'll get it, don't worry," Hopper said as he stood up. He opened the door to a startled and surprised Mike Wheeler, clearly judging from his facial expression that he had hoped that

Eleven would open the door. "Hey Mike, come on in," Hopper said as he turned to lead Mike into the living room. "Excuse the mess that's around here, but we haven't had very long to start on repairs," Hopper continued as he reached the living room, Mike trailing behind him. "El? Mike's here." Eleven bounced up from her position on the couch, staring at Mike with a look of happiness. "Hi, Mike," she said with a smile. Mike almost fell over with relief. She wasn't mad at him. Not anymore.

"Hi," he let out with a half smile. "Well, I'll leave you two kids to your talk," Hopper interrupted. "If anyone needs me, I'll be in my room." He exited the living room for his bedroom and shut the door behind him. After he had left, El sat back down on the couch and Mike did the same. They sat in silence for what seemed like an eternity before Eleven finally said something. "Can we...talk?" She asked, now facing Mike. He nodded. "That day at the cabin, when I was in the other room." "I...I don't think I follow," Mike stammered, though deep down he knew exactly what she was talking about. "Mike," El continued. "Friends *don't* lie." Mike's shoulders sagged and he sighed. "Yes, El. I do remember. I was...talking. Talking about...my feelings. My feelings about you. How I couldn't lose you again. Being broken up sucks. I didn't know how to deal with it. It felt like losing you all over again, only this time you were doing it yourself. And that made it hurt the most. I'm sorry for lying to you about not being able to see you. I didn't know what else to do. It's just..." Mike trailed off as he got choked up. Was sharing his feelings always going to be this hard? No wonder Hopper blew up on them.

He redirected his gaze towards Eleven. She had a teary look in her eyes and was smiling. "Mike," she finally replied. "I love you too." As she said this, her hand reached out and caressed Mike's cheek before pulling him in for a kiss. After they pulled apart, they both leaned their heads into each other, their foreheads touching, as they shared a smile. The creak of Hopper's bedroom door opening startled them and they quickly pulled apart. "Hey, hey, settle down," Hopper began as he stepped out into the living room.

"I just wanna talk to you guys." He sat on his recliner and moved it to face Mike and Eleven as they sat on the couch. He leaned forward to speak to them and took a deep breath, pausing to find the right

words. He looked up expecting them to be laughing at him or Mike whispering something in El's ear, but was presently surprised to find them both looking at him attentively, as if his every last movement mattered. "Alright," he finally began. "I think we all know that the last time I tried to do this, it didn't go over so well." Both Mike and El giggled a little, but stopped as soon as they began out of fear, almost, that Hopper would lose his temper. However, that didn't happen. Hopper allowed himself a small smile before continuing. "I just wanted to say, I'm sorry. I tried to force you guys apart. And I shouldn't have done that. It's not my place, and I can see how much you guys care about each other. So, Mike, feel free to keep coming by the cabin," Mike and El shared a quick glance. Who was this man and what had he done with Hopper?

"All I will ask of you two is three simple rules," Hopper continued. "One: You can't be alone together when I'm not here. You can hang out here when I'm at work, but at least one of your friends needs to be here with you so you two aren't alone," Mike and El quickly nodded. That was slightly less freedom than they had before the Starcourt incident, but they both felt lucky to have that much at all still. "Two," Hopper went on. "You are to go no further than kissing when you're together." El's brow furrowed in confusion at this statement. "What comes after kissing?" she asked, clearly not understanding what her father meant. Hopper's face went red before explaining, "We'll talk about it later, El. But when I tell you, then you'll understand." "Is it happy screams?" she replied, pressing for an answer. "What?! Did you tell her about that kind of stuff?!" Hopper angrily asked Mike, giving him a death glare. Mike's eyes widened in surprise and immediately threw his hands up in a defensive manner. "No! I didn't, I swear! I don't know what she's talking about!" "Max told me about them," El interjected. "She says that girls would make them when they were alone with her brother, Billy."

Hopper rolled his eyes and ran his hands through his hair. "Ohhh," He said. "S-sorry about that Mike," he said with his hands covering his face, embarrassed by the subject and the fact that he had almost let himself get angry again. "Look, El, I'll promise I'll explain it soon," he continued as he took his hands from his face and made eye contact with Mike and El again. "Just know kissing is okay for now." Mike and El nodded attentively. "And last, but not least," Hopper said, "El,

for the sake of your poor old dad, keep the door open three inches." "Yes," El said with a teary look in her face. "That's all I ask of you guys." Hopper finished. El instantly bounced over from her spot on the couch and gave him a hug. As they broke apart, Hopper faced Mike. "Mike," he began, "feel free to come by tomorrow." He said with a smile. "Okay!" Mike said, not caring that the exclamation in his voice showed his level of excitement. "I'll be here first thing in the morning, El," he said while looking at Eleven, a big smile on his face. "Tomorrow," El smiled back.

"Alright, it's getting late," Hopper interjected. "Mike, you need a ride home? It's a little late." "Thanks, but I'll be fine," Mike answered. He walked over to El after both had stood up and gave her a goodbye hug and kiss on the cheek. After Mike had walked out the door, Hopper looked at his daughter. "I take it everything's okay now?" "Yes," El nodded. "He's my boyfriend again." "Good," Hopper replied. "I'm glad you're happy, El. Why don't we get ready for bed, yeah?" El nodded and prepared to get ready for bed, heading to her bedroom. As she walked off, Hopper smiled to himself while watching her go. *Joyce was right*, He thought to himself. *She was right*. As Hopper prepared himself for bed, he remembered that their date at Enzo's was set for the next night. He couldn't remember the last time he had gotten this excited about a date. He hoped Joyce felt the same way. But, as with so many other things in his life, he'd have to wait to find out.

A/N: Okay, so chapter two is in the books! I hope you guys liked it, I really wanted to clear everything up between Eleven and Mike as well as Hopper, though I feel that some stuff will still need to be cleared up between Mike and Hopper. Chapter three is mainly going to be centered around Jim and Joyce's big date at Enzo's but I think I am going to go all out and make this a season 4 spec fic. I won't give away too much but just know that there is still very much a threat in Hawkins, Indiana. Thank you to everyone who has left a positive review. I hope you guys enjoyed this chapter as much as I did writing it!

4. Chapter Three: The Big Date

Hopper straightened his tie as he stood staring at himself in the mirror. It was Friday, 6:00 PM, and in just one short hour, he'd finally be taking Joyce Byers out to Enzo's for their date. Hopper frowned. He didn't like the way he looked with the tie. *Too formal*, he thought as he unloosened it and tossed it to the side. He then grabbed his comb from the sink and ran it through his hair, trying to tame his wild mane of hair. *Ahh, screw it*, Hopper thought in frustration while angrily slamming the comb down, upset that he couldn't get his hair to look the way he wanted.

"Dad, you look fine," Eleven called out from the couch, where she and her boyfriend Mike were watching a movie. "Yeah, Hopper, you look good," Mike called out as well. "Thanks, kids," Hopper said as he walked over to join them. He was wearing a new Hawaiian shirt that he'd had Flo pick up earlier in the day as well as his sport coat he had worn the last time he had gone to Enzo's, along with some khaki slacks and some tan dress shoes. Mike and El had also noticed a permeating smell coming from him, which they could only guess was cologne. "Do you guys think it'd be too early to leave now?" He asked while pacing nervously. "It's only a 20 minute drive to Will's house, and it's only 6:05," Mike replied. "I think it'd be cute," Eleven chimed in. "Alright, El wins," Hopper stated, clapping his hands. "I'll be back by 12, El," he added while walking to the door.

Joyce Byers didn't know what to do with herself. For the first time in almost a year, she found herself getting ready for a date. She hadn't been on one of those since she was with Bob, before he had been taken from her, by the same horrible things that had tried to take her son. It had been a long grieving process in getting over losing Bob, but she finally felt confident that she was ready. The pain would never truly go away, but it had been taking less of a space in her mind over the past few months.

And to be honest with herself, she was really glad that Jim had asked her out. She wasn't ready to admit it just yet, but she'd always had a thing for him, going back to high school. But then he got drafted to go to Vietnam, and Lonnie offered her what she didn't have at the

time: security. She felt as though she couldn't afford to wait, so she took the sure thing. What a fool she'd been. The only good thing to ever come from her sham of a marriage to Lonnie had been her two boys, and Joyce was so grateful for them. Then, a couple years after the divorce, Jim had come back into her life. Last she heard, he had gone to New York after his time in Vietnam and become a police officer. Had a wife, a daughter. So Joyce had been surprised when she had heard that Hopper had come all by himself to take Hawkins' vacant chief of police job. Soon, the rumors began to spread. Word of a nasty divorce and the death of his young daughter went around in hushed tones throughout Hawkins, the type of town where everybody knows everybody.

Joyce tried to be supportive in their limited interactions, but Jim wasn't the same. Whenever she saw him, he always looked like he was just going through the motions, as if he had lost all hope and he was only waiting to die. Until the day that Will had gone missing. At first, Jim seemed like he didn't want to help. But over the next few days of the ordeal, he proved himself instrumental in getting her her boy back, confirming the body from the quarry was a fake and believing her when no one else would, as well as taking her to the Upside Down to rescue her boy, and even resuscitated him.

After the whole ordeal, Jim seemed like he was becoming himself again, slowly but surely, but Joyce couldn't quite place her finger as on to why, until nearly a year later, when it was revealed that Jim had taken in Eleven, the little girl from Hawkins Lab that had helped her find Will. And by that summer, the old Hopper was finally back. He would constantly come into Melvald's on his way to work to ask Joyce for parenting advice, and Joyce would be lying if she didn't feel sparks. But when he first asked her out, she didn't know how to respond. She was scared, honestly. Didn't want to get too attached and then lose him. But that almost happened anyway over the next few days thanks to the Mind Flayer and Starcourt. So, Joyce decided while in Starcourt, that life was too short to be scared. She asked Jim out. And he said yes, and they both survived. She let out a deep breath as she smiled at herself in the mirror. She was ready.

As Joyce walked out into the living room, Jonathan and Will were sitting watching a movie they had rented from Family Video. "How

do I look?" She asked her two boys, holding her arms out in front of her for dramatic effect. "You look great,Mom," Will said. She was wearing the top she had worn on Thanksgiving several years ago as well as a black skirt that went down to her knees. "Yeah, Mom, you look good." Jonathan offered. She smiled, but before she could reply to them, there was a knock at the door.

"Already? It's only 6:30," she said, giving the boys a smile as she went to answer the door. She opened the door to a smiling Hopper standing before her, a bouquet of roses in hand. "Hey, Joyce," he greeted. "Hopper," Joyce replied with warmth in her voice as she quickly went to give him a hug. *I don't know who's falling for who faster*, Hopper thought to himself. Joyce invited him in and Jim greeted the kids. "Hey, guys," he offered. "Hey", they replied in unison before turning their attention back to their movie. "Shall we?" Hopper asked, offering his arm to Joyce. She took it, and he led her out the door, yelling to the kids to be in bed by 11, and not to wait up.

Hopper opened the Blazer's passenger door for her. She turned her head to look at him in mock surprise. "Since when did you get so polite?" she joked. "I can clean up when I want to," Hopper admitted, slightly chuckling. As they drove off toward Enzo's they made slight small talk. They arrived at the restaurant and were quickly seated at a table by the same server Hopper had blown up on several days earlier, who had instantly went white as a sheet when he saw them walk in. "Why does that guy look so scared of you?" Joyce asked Jim, placing a hand on his arm in question. "Oh, that guy," Hopper grimaced. "I kinda blew up on him the night you didn't show up." He looked down. "Oh, Hop, I'm so sorry," Joyce said. "I should've called." "No, it's alright," Hopper replied, looking up at Joyce with a smile and taking her hand. "We're here now. I shouldn't have pressured you." "It's not that I was pressured, or that I didn't want to, Hop," she smiled back. "It's just...I was scared. Scared that I could lose you somehow. Like..." Her voice quavered as she thought back to what had happened to Bob. "Hey," Hopper said tenderly, leaning in to face her. "You didn't lose me. You *won't* lose me. I promise you that." Joyce nodded, and took his hand and pressed it to her lips.

As their meal passed by, they found conversation drifting to their kids. "You talked to Mike and El?" Joyce asked. "Yeah, it went well,"

Hopper nodded. Joyce raised a eyebrow in question. "Really?" she asked. "Yeah, it did," Hopper continued. "They're back together, and I only asked that they follow three rules. They both seemed okay with it," He smiled. "To be honest, Joyce, you were right the whole time. And I'm really glad that she has Mike. He's helped her so much. I just couldn't see it." "You should tel him that," Joyce replied. "Uhh, just not yet. I still want him to be scared of me a little." They both laughed. After they had finished their meal and Hopper had paid the bill, they set off in his Blazer back towards the Byers house.

When they arrived, they sat on the porch swing together, Joyce leaned into Jim, his arm draped around her. "I had a really nice time tonight, Joyce." "Me too." she replied, in that cute voice that drove Jim so damn crazy, while looking up at him. He kissed her forehead. He was so lucky to finally have Joyce in his life the way he had always wanted.

He had chased her so hard in high school, but she never seemed to respond in the way showing that she was interested. Then Lonnie, *Lonnie Byers*, of all people, won her over somehow. Jim had warned her that Lonnie didn't really care about her, or had tried to at least, but Joyce would have none of it. She'd always been strong willed. Then Hopper found himself fighting for his life in Vietnam, a victim of a outdated government system that wouldn't give its citizens the freedom to die, but chose who would. And so, when Hopper returned, he went to New York. The NYPD welcomed his combat experience, thinking it would serve them well in their ranks. Hopper had even met a woman, Diane, there. But he never really loved her. Not the way he did Joyce. The only good thing to come out of his time in New York was his little girl, Sara, and just as quickly as she had come, she was gone. Then his marriage got exposed for the sham it was. He and Diane had never really been lovers, just co-parents. With the death of their little girl, they had nothing left in common. And so, Hopper found himself back in Hawkins, Indiana, the place he had once sworn to himself he would never return to. And yet, only a short few years later, here he sat happy again, holding the woman he had wanted all along in his arms.

"Hey, you okay, Hop?" Joyce was looking up at him questioningly. He had let himself zone out into his thoughts again. "Yeah," He

answered. "I was just thinkin'." "About what?" Joyce asked quizzically, sitting straight up. "'Bout how much I love you." He smiled at her. Joyce smiled back and decided to disregard any reservations she had about a relationship with Hopper right then and there. She grabbed his shirt and pulled him in for a passionate kiss, neither of them caring about anything else going on in the world at that time, only savoring the moment.

A/N: So, there's Chapter 3. I'm starting to think of disregarding the season 4 spec fic, and maybe making that a separate fic from this. If I do that, I just plan on doing one or two more chapters and they'll probably both be time jumps, and a epilogue of course. I hope you guys are enjoying this so far, though! Leave me a review so I can know your thoughts on it, even if you don't like it! Let me know what you think I could do better!

5. Chapter Four: The Zoomer

Mike hadn't known why Hopper had left him and El alone that evening, but he had been grateful. They'd gotten to catch up on some much needed alone time, though Mike knew Hopper would be furious if he ever found out. By midnight, Hopper still hadn't returned, and El didn't want to be left alone, so Mike reluctantly agreed to spend the night with her. It was the first time he had slept in the same bed as a girl before. It had made him feel like a man, even if all they did was kiss. El had fallen asleep in his arms around 1 AM, and it would be a memory he'd look back on fondly forever. Still, he couldn't help but worry that they'd get caught.

What would Hopper do if he came back and found them? It turns out they had nothing to worry about, though, as Hopper didn't get back until 9:30. Mike had still been at the cabin, but he had been able to sneak out a window and bike off before Hopper could notice.

Mike felt bad that Hopper had only asked three things of him and El and that they couldn't even do that much, but he'd be lying if he said he didn't have a great time. They hadn't done anything they knew they weren't supposed to, just the usual kissing. El wasn't ready to go beyond that and Mike was never going to make her uncomfortable. He'd told El he'd be back at the cabin around noon, but first he had to take care of something. He had to talk to Max.

When Hopper entered the cabin, he seemed cheerier than usual to his adopted daughter and happily greeted her. "Hey, kid. How are you this beautiful morning?" "Good," El said questioningly from her position on the couch, where she had been watching Saturday morning cartoons. She half expected him to ask her where Mike was and why he hadn't left when Hopper did the previous night, but instead he asked her something entirely different.

"What do you know about sex?" Hopper asked, taking a seat next to her in his recliner. "Sex?" El replied curiously, not knowing the meaning of the word. "Yeah, kid. I should've done this when you first started dating Mike, but I was scared. And, I need to explain why I didn't come home until just now."

"Because of...sex?" El asked inquisitively. "Well, yes, more or less," Hopper replied as he ran his hair through his fingers, chuckling nervously to himself. "Sex is what comes after kissing," Hopper admitted to his daughter. "It's what you call happy screams." A look of understanding passed over El's face. "Ohhh," she nodded. "Girlfriends do that with their boyfriends." She added knowingly.

"Right, and that's why I was gone so late," Hopper added. "But you don't wanna just go around talking about sex all the time with just anyone. It needs to be private between you and who you love, and you need to make sure you only do it with the person you love." Hopper replied. "I think I follow," El said.

She paused for a moment before asking, "Do you love Will's mom?" Hopper blushed a bit before nodding, "Yeah. Yeah I think I do, kid." El's face broke out in a big smile as she sat up and asked, "Will she be my new mother?" Hopper, a little taken aback, blushed before replying. "We'll see, El. But first we gotta talk about this thing called a period..."

It was 10:30 when Mike made it to Max's house. He dismounted his bike and walked up to the door. Before he could knock, however, it was quickly swung open by her stepfather, Neil. "And you are?" The gruff, mustached man asked Mike, looking down at the boy, sizing him up. "Mike Wheeler. I'm friends with Max." "You aren't trying to date her, are you? She might be dating that black kid, but that doesn't mean I want her running around on him like a little whore," Neil spat.

"What? No. We're just friends. I have a girlfriend." Mike replied, matter of factly. "Oh," Neil's face fell. It had been only a couple of days since his son, Billy, had passed away, and he blamed himself for it. He reminded himself that if he was ever going to be a better person and better dad for Max, he had to stop being so confrontational. "Sorry about that, kid. Come on in." Neil held the door open for Mike and invited him in.

"Max! One of your friends is here!" "Okay!" Max shouted back, bounding in from her room, though she stopped dead in her tracks when she saw who it was. "Hi," she finally let out. "Hi," Mike replied before asking, "can we talk?" Mike and Max sat on the curb in front of

her house, each not knowing what to say to the other. "I'm glad that you and El are friends, really," Mike started. "Um, okay? Is that what you came here to say?" Max scoffed.

"No, Max, listen to me!" Mike answered. "I just wanted to say, I know you guys are good friends. And I know we both really care about El, and that we haven't always gotten along," "Mike, it's fine," Max interrupted, but Mike held up his hand. "No, just listen to me," he continued. "Being broken up with El was awful. I admit I lied, and I never should've done that. But you kind of gave her bad dating advice there, you know." Max just glared at him.

"My hands were tied behind my back," Mike admitted. "Hopper threatened me." Max stared at him for what seemed to him like an eternity. "No," she started. "I'm sorry too. You're right. We both really care about El, and we need to come together for her sake." She extended her hand out to him. "Friends?" She asked. Mike took it. "For life," he replied. "You're our zoomer."

Max smiled before looking down and continuing. "I would've told her to give you another chance if I knew the context," she said. "Yeah," Mike replied. "I should've just came out and been honest the whole time." "It's just, I've never really had a good relationship to go off of, you know? My parents weren't together long, and my step dad is kind of an asshole to everyone." Her voice quavered. "And Billy never really taught me anything."

Mike gave her a reassuring pat on the back. "Do you miss him?" She looked up, at first what seemed to be a look of annoyance, but she had tears in her eyes. "Yeah," she answered sadly. "But I think it's going to at least make my stepdad change. He hasn't yelled at me since it happened." "He seemed pretty rough when he came to the door," Mike replied. "You should've seen him when Billy was alive," Max responded. Mike noticed how upset she was. "Hey, it's going to be okay, you know that right?" Max nodded. "Thanks, Mike."

Mike nodded in response and stood up, looking at his watch. 11:30, it read. "Oh, crap!" He said. "I told El I'd be at the cabin at 12!" "That's okay," Max replied. "Lucas and Dustin are going to meet me at Family Video at 6 tonight. You and El should come along." "Definitely," Mike replied. "I'll see you then!" He then hopped on his bike and sped off.

As he pedaled off into the distance, Max smiled to herself, pleased that she and Mike had been able to clear everything up. Her brother Billy may be gone, but she was sure with her friends, she could get through anything.

A/N: And there you have it! My big focus for this chapter was resolving any remnants of the conflict between Mike and Max regarding Eleven. I also decided to throw in a comedic/serious moment with Hopper giving El the "talk". Big s/o to tuckpendleton87 for giving me the idea to have Mike talk to Max. I'm not making this a season 4 spec fic anymore, though I am making one of its own! I'm thinking this story has about two chapters left. Leave me a review below and let me know what you want to see or what you think I could do better!

6. Chapter Five: Three Months Later

OCTOBER 4, 1985

Night had fallen in Hawkins. The roads were mostly empty, except for a familiar police Blazer going down Mirkwood Road, headlights on. The vehicle pulled into the driveway of a certain Byers household, coming to a halt as the engine cut off. The driver's side door opened to reveal none other than Jim Hopper, fresh off another long shift of police work. It had been 3 months since he had survived his latest encounter with the Upside Down.

He had met with Dr. Owens since then, who had told him that the Russians were able to infiltrate Hawkins through a mole previously employed by Hawkins Lab. Who, he didn't know, but he was certain that he'd try to open the gate again. The Starcourt incident had caused an increased government presence in Hawkins, which initially worried Jim because of Eleven, but Owens had told him he had nothing to worry about. The government no longer had any interest in his daughter, especially now that her powers were gone.

As Jim opened the door, he found the house quiet and dark. Eleven, Will, and Jonathan were all asleep in their respective rooms. The door to Joyce and Hopper's was open a crack, but it looked like Joyce had gone to bed already as well, as there was no light radiating from the room.

Hopper smiled as he thought of his wife. He'd asked her to marry him on their third official date, to which she quickly said no. But after days of pestering, she finally agreed, and they took a visit to the courthouse within a week. Both of them had had to face the reality that they could lose the other, so they had decided that if they were going to spend the rest of their lives together, they may as well make it official while they still could.

The damages to Hopper's cabin ending up being more trouble than they were worth, so he and El had moved in as soon as they could. Hopper went to check on the kids in their respective bedrooms before joining his wife in their bedroom. Jonathan had been a little apprehensive of Hopper at first, due to the way Lonnie had treated

his mother, but he warmed up quickly when he saw how happy Hopper made her. Will was just glad to finally have a father figure in his life who didn't judge him for who he was, and took an active interest in his life. Eleven, of course, had been the happiest. She was finally getting what she had always wanted-a normal family.

Hopper lingered for a bit as he stopped at El's room, staring at his daughter sleeping peacefully in her bed. She'd come a long way from where she'd been when Hopper first took her in. She was starting high school in the fall, had a family that loved her, friends that cared about her, and had a steady boyfriend in Mike, even if they did drive Hopper crazy. He knew she was disappointed her powers hadn't come back yet, but he knew that was coming sooner rather than later. He just hoped that their return had nothing to do with the Upside Down. Jim had had enough of that place for a lifetime.

Hopper then stepped into the master bedroom, setting his hat down on the dresser. He silently stripped to his underwear and climbed into the bed next to his sleeping wife. "Hop?" Joyce murmured, half asleep. "That you?" "Yeah, it's me, Joyce," Hopper replied as he stretched his body out, placing a arm around her. Joyce rolled over and flashed him a smile. "Can you believe it, Hop? For once, the world isn't falling apart around us or our children, and we actually have each other." "Oh, I believe it alright," Hopper grinned as he leaned in for a kiss. Joyce smiled as she pulled away. "And who knows?" Joyce added with a mischievous smile. "Maybe we'll be adding someone else to the mix soon."

Hopper, not catching the implication of what she had said, silently murmured in acknowledgment. "Hop?" Joyce asked gently, sitting up on her elbow and placing a hand on Hopper's shoulder. "Do you understand what I'm saying?" Hopper opened one eye in question. "No, not really." He admitted. "Hop," Joyce continued. "I'm pregnant." Hopper immediately sat up in surprise, eyes wide.

"Joyce," he began. "Are you serious? I thought we were too old." "I did, too," Joyce said laughingly, sitting up to meet Hopper's gaze. "But every test I took came back positive, and the doctor confirmed it this morning." Hopper began laughing. "Well, this, this is great, Joyce," Hopper said with a smile as he pulled his wife in for a hug, both of them sharing a tearful laugh. "I thought you'd be mad," Joyce

said, looking up at her husband. "Mad? Why in the hell would I be mad? I'm getting to have a kid with the woman I love the most," Hopper said, grinning down at her before placing a gentle kiss on her head. "Do the kids know yet?" "No," Joyce admitted. "I figured we'd tell them together."

"Sure, we can do that," Hopper replied, smiling. "I can't believe it, Joyce. We're going to *have a baby*." Joyce smiled and gave Hopper a rub on his stomach. "Are you happy, Hop?" Hopper turned around to look at her and pulled her close to him. "Are you kidding me, Joyce? I don't think I've ever been this happy before." He then pulled her in for a kiss, both of them grateful that they had each other after everything had happened, and that their love was being rewarded with a new addition to their blended family.

A/N: And thus, this story is coming to a close. A epilogue will be posted later, and just as a heads up, will be some nice Mileven fluff for you all. Didn't intentionally mean to make this a fluff piece at first, but you know what? Hopper deserved better than what they got in S3E8 so I had to do it to them. My next big project after this is Stranger Things 4, it's going to take me a while to write but be on the lookout for it. Hope you guys are enjoying this story.

7. Epilogue

NOVEMBER 7, 1989

"Come on, dude! You're going to be late!" Dustin shook his best friend, Mike Wheeler awake. "Fuck...what time is it?" Mike asked as he rolled over in his bed. They were in his childhood basement, along with Lucas, Will, Steve, and Jonathan, who had all gathered there together the previous night for a party.

Mike's *bachelor* party.

"Come on man, you've got a big day ahead," Steve said, shaking the now 19-year old Mike awake. Mike only moaned and rolled over. "Jesus, should've known he was a lightweight," Steve quipped. "Yeah, well, I told you not to bring alcohol, Steve!" Dustin replied, throwing his hands up in the air. "What, and not give the groom a good time for his bachelor party?" Steve threw his hands up in defense as his face squinched in an exasperated manner. Dustin rolled his eyes as he replied, "Yes, because you just *have* to have alcohol to have a good time. Not to mention that we're *underage*, Steve!" "No one's going to find out! Besides, you sure didn't seem to have a problem with it last night!" Steve yelled back, throwing his arms out in frustration. "Yeah, it's totally not like Mike's soon-to-be father-in-law isn't the chief of police or anything!" Dustin shot back.

The pair continued their bickering as Mike finally sat up from his basement couch. "Alright, alright, I'm up!" he exclaimed. "What time is it?" "11:00 AM," Dustin replied matter of factly. "What?!" Mike exclaimed, practically launching out of bed and frantically searching for clothes. "The wedding's at 7!" "Mike, relax," Will stepped in. "You've got time. We just need to start getting ready. Mom wanted us there at 1, so we need to eat lunch now." "Right," Mike replied. All the boys helped Mike get dressed in his tux, a hand me down from his father, Ted. It was a little big on him, but it wasn't a horrible look. They quickly ate some sandwiches that had been set out for them by Mike's mother, and then piled into Steve's and Jonathan's cars for transportation.

They arrived at the church at 1:30, only thirty minutes late. "You're

late!", Nancy chastised her husband, Jonathan, as she handed him their two year old daughter, Barbara, as soon as he climbed out of the car. "Sorry," He replied. "Mike took forever to wake up." "Of course he did," Nancy rolled her eyes. "Come on, you need to get started on pictures," she said, dragging him away. "Mike, get over here," Jim Hopper waved to his soon-to-be son in law from the church's entrance. "We need to talk." Mike gulped. What now? Before he walked off, Lucas gave him a reassuring pat on the shoulder.

Hopper had led Mike to a back room in the church and closed the door, allowing them some privacy to talk. From what Mike could tell, the room was some kind of sunday school classroom. "I just wanna say," Hopper began. "I'm really happy for you and El. I know I haven't always acted like the most supportive guy, but I'm glad you guys have each other." "Thanks, Hopper," Mike said. Hopper took a moment to take in the appearance of the young man he was about to give away his daughter to. He still had the same unkempt, messy black hair, though his physique had filled out a bit, though he was probably still far from the strongest guy his age. Mike and El had both graduated from high school that past May, Mike from Hawkins High, while El had been homeschooled by Joyce.

Mike was going off to college at Notre Dame, to study physics. El, however, wasn't really sure what she wanted to do. Hopper had asked, but the answer was always to be with Mike every time, though Hopper had told her time and time again that wasn't really a career choice. She had been working for Hopper as his secretary at the station, taking Flo's spot once she had retired. So Jim hadn't really been surprised when, at the 4th of July party that he and Joyce held that year, that Mike took El aside and asked for her hand in marriage. Hopper had known the day was coming, but he hadn't expected it to come so damn soon. So here they were, Mike on fall break from classes, not being able to stand being away from El as long as he had, wanting to marry her as soon as possible. Joyce had been more than receptive to the idea, and though Hopper had his reservations, he decided to go along with it. He knew that in the end, it was going to happen sooner or later anyway, and he was powerless to stop it.

"Hopper?" Mike asked. "Yeah?" Hopper looked up from his thoughts. "Thank you for taking El in and giving her a home, when she needed

it the most. And thank you for being her father. I'm sorry we haven't always agreed on everything, but my El wouldn't be who she is today without you." Hopper smiled down at him. He knew El was making the right choice. "Thanks, kid. I'm glad you're in her life. Welcome to the family." He gave Mike a reassuring hug. "Let's do this, yeah?" He smiled at him. Mike nodded in response.

Mike stood in front of the church next to the groomsmen. He surveyed the wedding party and the attendees before him. Will was serving as best man, followed by Dustin, Lucas, and Steve Harrington. Will was attending the University of Chicago, studying art. Dustin was "taking a year off", which was code for him staying home to work on his inventions, as he fancied himself a crockpot inventor. Mike rolled his eyes at the thought of his friend becoming the next Doc Brown. Lucas was actually enlisting into the Army, leaving for his basic training in a month. Mike was immensely proud of his friend for being brave enough to serve the country, but he also felt for him. The decision hadn't been easy on the party, especially Lucas himself, moreso when Max told him that she wouldn't be able to handle the separation and decided to end things between them. Steve's path in life, however, had surprised Mike most of all.

It had looked like he was going to bum around working at the Family Video forever, until one day Steve had told the party he had actually gotten into college. That in and of itself was surprising for sure, but what he was going to study shocked them even more. Education. Steve had gotten a teaching degree and was now a science teacher and basketball coach at Hawkins Middle School. Across from them stood Eleven's bridesmaids. Her maid of honor was Max who was attending the University of Indiana for fashion design, followed by Nancy, who was now a writer for the Hawkins Post, and Holly, Mike's youngest sister who had developed a close bond with El. Jonathan was serving as photographer, and his and Nancy's daughter Barbara was the flower girl, with Hopper and Joyce's young daughter Joy as the ring bearer.

The doors finally opened, and El began walking down the aisle on Hopper's arm. She was wearing a white dress that was actually the one Joyce had worn when she married Hopper, but Mike didn't care. She always looked beautiful to him no matter what she wore. When

she arrived at the front of the church, Hopper leaned forward, saying "You hurt her, there's a gun with your name on it," to Mike, before pulling back to give El a kiss on the cheek, then unlocking his arm from her's and taking his seat next to Joyce in the front row of the church. Mike smiled at Eleven as she stood before him at the altar. He couldn't remember a day where he'd been this happy. Not even the splitting headache he had gotten from his hangover was dampening his sky high spirits. "You look beautiful," Mike whispered down to his bride. She sheepishly looked down and smiled, before looking back up with a smile. "Thank you," she replied softly as she took Mike's hands in hers.

The ceremony went on without a hitch, and when the priest said, "You may now kiss the bride," Mike leaned forward and pulled Eleven in for a passionate kiss, after which they stood together with their hands, clasped together, in the air as their respective family and friends in attendance cheered. When Mike and El entered the reception, they were introduced for the first time as Mr. and Mrs. Michael Wheeler. After the wedding festivities had mostly ended, Hopper silently walked up to the couple with a key in hand. Mike, seated at a table with El while eating some wedding cake, looked up at his father in law. "What's that?" he asked, pointing a finger at the key Hopper held in one of his hands.

"Take it," Hopper replied, placing the key in Mike's palm and closing it. "It's yours." "What's ours?" El asked, leaning in to the conversation. "The cabin," Hopper continued. Mike and El exchanged a glance with each other before both turned to look back at Hopper. "But I thought you didn't want to repair it," El said. Hopper let out a small chuckle before continuing. "That's what I initially decided," he answered, "But I had Powell and Callahan help me clean it out and fix it up over the past few months. It's as good as new, and it's your guys' new home, if you want it," he smiled. Mike's mouth stood agape as El rushed up to hug her father, "Of course, we want it! Thank you!" "Only the best for my girl," Hopper replied, smiling. "Now, why don't we enjoy the rest of the evening?" He asked as he gestured with one arm to the dance floor. Both Mike and Eleven grinned as they joined him, dancing the night away as husband and wife for the first time.

ONE YEAR LATER

DECEMBER 25, 1990

"Mike!" Eleven yelled as she waited on the swing on the cabin's front porch. "Come on already! We're going to be late!" Mike quickly appeared from the cabin, toting a small child in his arms. "Sorry, El," he grinned sheepishly. "MJ had another accident." Eleven playfully frowned at her young son with her hands on her hips before moving in to tickle him. "Little Michael James, have you been giving your daddy trouble?" She asked, laughing as she tickled him. MJ smiled back at his mother. "Not too much," Mike grinned. "He just likes to take his sweet time getting ready." "Gee, I wonder where he gets that from," Eleven asked in response, rolling her eyes and laughing. "Come on, let's go. I told Hop we'd be there at noon."

Mike nodded as he handed his young son off to his mother and began loading up their car with baby supplies. Within a couple minutes, everyone and everything was packed and ready to go, and the family peeled out of the cabin's driveway out onto the main road. It wasn't long before they reached their destination, the Hopper house. El carried her son with her to the door while Mike got all of their supplies out of the car. Just as El was about to knock on the door, it was flung open by Joyce whose attention was immediately grabbed by her young grandson.

"Hi, guys!" she greeted excitedly, before turning her attention back to MJ as Mike joined his wife at the entrance. "Come on, Joyce, aren't you going to invite them in?" Hopper asked from his recliner in the living room, puffing on a cigarette as he watched his daughter Joy play with her new toys she had received earlier that morning. "Oh, Hopper," Joyce glanced back at Jim. "Come in, come in," Joyce then said, quickly shooing Mike and Eleven in as she grabbed MJ from his mother. "Where's everyone else?" Mike asked, as he stepped into the house and noticed it was empty aside from Hopper, Joyce, and their daughter. "Jonathan, Nancy, and Barbara won't be here til 2, and Will just called saying he had to stop for gas, so he'll probably be a while, too," Joyce sighed. "That's okay," Mike replied as he and El sat on the couch.

El, however, was quickly roped in by her little sister to help her build a new LEGO set she had gotten for Christmas. She squealed with delight as Eleven used her powers to put the pieces in place. "Give

my grandson a good first Christmas, Mike?" Hopper said as he stood up and grabbed MJ from his wife. "Sure did," Mike replied, laughing as his son began pulling and grabbing his grandfather's beard. Hopper simply rolled his eyes as he bounced his grandson up and down. As he took his seat back on the recliner, Hopper began to reflect on how lucky he was. 7 years ago, he had been in a deep, dark place, and yet, in the passing of those 7 short years, here he was, happier than he could have ever been. He had a daughter who loved him, and was a bit of a badass herself, having gained her powers back in one final confrontation with the Upside Down in 1986, a son in law who would do anything for his daughter, and another young daughter he had never expected to light up his life the way she had. Of course, he also had a little grandson now, who Hopper couldn't imagine life without, even if the kid did look like his dad and tugged on Hopper's graying beard. But most important of all to him, he finally had the woman he had wanted all along, ever since he first spotted her walking up to him on the school stairwell, asking him if she could bum a smoke. As he watched his growing family interact and enjoy the holiday together, Hopper couldn't help but smile, grateful that he had survived that fateful 4th of July in 1985, and that he had finally been rewarded with another family of his own.

A/N: And there you have it. This took me forever to write, but I really wanted to cover all my tracks and show off my ideas of where I have these characters ending up. I also wanted to include some nice fluff, even if writing it did make me physically cringe. I hope you have all enjoyed reading this story as much as I have writing it. My next project is going to be a much bigger one than this, as I'll be writing my own Season 4 spec fic. It's going to take me a lot of time to write it, as I have yet to actually begin writing any drafts for it, due to the need to go back and watch the show to observe how a Stranger Things season unfolds, I really want this fic to be good and for it to seem like the real deal. Also, I'll probably be busy with work (per usual), but I will do my best to at least get the first episode/chapter out by the middle of October. Thank you so much to everyone for reading/following/favoriting/reviewing! Like I said in the prologue, this was my first fanfic in a long time so all forms of feedback are/were greatly appreciated. Be sure to leave a review to let me know your final thoughts!